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ABSTRACT

The Clinton County (Pennsylvania) Development Center for Adults studied to what extent the planning and evaluation process for adult learners in the adult basic education/General Educational Development program was improved by the use of an individualized education plan (IEP) form. The project involved collaboration with other instructors in the program to gather their ideas and those of 22 Literacy Corps tutors from Lock Haven University (LHU). The work on the form began in mid-November 1998 and continued through mid-January 1999. By the first of February, the students' files contained an IEP form completed as much as possible. An intern from LHU, a VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) volunteer, and the instructor compiled the proposed form. During the first two weeks of February, the Literacy Corps tutors were matched with the adult learners. Eleven of the student files given to the Literacy Corps tutors contained a completed IEP form; the other 11 did not. Having an IEP form helped tutors become familiar with new students. The tutors with the IEP forms began the actual instructional process much more quickly, while those without took about 3 weeks deciding where their learners needed help. Appended are the original and revised IEP forms.) (YLB)

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PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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A Learning From Practice Project

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PRODUCT

"Pennsylvania Action Research Network:
Staff Development Through
Six Professional Development Centers"

Project Number 099-99-9010
July 1998-June 1999

Project Director
Dr. Gary Kuhne
Assistant Professor and Regional Director of Adult Education
The Pennsylvania State University

Note: Action Research is a process of systematic inquiry credited to Kurt Lewin who popularized it in the U.S. in the 1940"s. Today it is considered a system of qualitative research. Typical of action research, none of the individual projects in this monograph series claims to have generalizable application beyond the specific project described. However, each monograph report can serve to be illustrative, instructive and provides the potential for replication in other locations. For a level of generalizability, it is recommended that the reader seek common patterns in the monograph reports in this series, and the wider literature, or contact the Action Research Network for assistance in this.

I. ABSTRACT

The Clinton County Development Center for Adults conducted a research project to find out to what extent the development of a form for an individualized education plan (IEP) for the adult learners in the ABE/GED program improved the planning and evaluation process. The project involved collaboration with other instructors in the program to gather their ideas. Twenty-two Literacy Corps tutors from Lock Haven University were involved in the project as well. The work on the form began in mid-November 1998 and continued through mid-January 1999. By the first of February the students' files contained an IEP form as complete as possible. An intern from Lock Haven University, our VISTA volunteer and I worked on completing the proposed form. During the first two weeks of February, the Literacy Corps tutors were matched with the adult learners. Eleven of the student files given to the Literacy Corps tutors contained a completed IEP form and the other eleven did not contain the form. The object of the control group was to see how much, if any, the IEP form made in the planning and evaluation process for the tutors. Also, their comments would provide additional feedback enabling me to draw conclusions such as, "Is the information that is included on the form appropriate and/or sufficient to the process?" "If so, what difference did it make in planning and evaluation?" "What additional changes need be made at this time?"

II. PROBLEM

The research for this project is to be conducted at the Clinton County Development Center for Adults in Lock Haven in the ABE/GED classes. The setting is rural and the adult learners in these classes are working on all levels of abilities including beginning literacy through intermediate ABE, GED prep and adult secondary. The program also serves a few ESL students. Our adult students range in age from teens to the fifties.

The problem is that the information necessary to designing and implementing an educational plan for the adult learners in our program is not contained in the learners' files in any specific order. In many instances, I have discovered an inconsistency of information contained in these files as well.

I am a new instructor to this program and to the field of adult education. (My previous teaching experience was in elementary education.) The previous instructor left after having been in this position eight years. My questions and frustrations, as well as those of another instructor new

to this program, as we worked to become familiar with this instructional process and the learners were many. Additionally, we experienced the frustration of the PAL tutors and the Literacy Corps tutors and they went through the same process. The need for change was great, so the idea of an IEP form began to emerge.

The Lock Haven University Literacy Corps tutors work with the adult learners for approximately three months. In order to maximize their effectiveness, it is very important that these tutors have the information to begin planning and working effectively with tutees quickly. In the past it has taken approximately two to three weeks for the tutors to interpret the information in the student files and design and implement an appropriate education plan for their tutee(s). The tutor coordinator has had to have several meetings with each tutor in the initial period after training. I am suggesting that with the additional information presented in the organized format offered with the proposed IEP form, the educational planning and evaluation period may be shortened, thus making for more efficient use of everyone's time.

III. PLANNING

The intervention plan begins with collaboration with other instructors to provide the necessary information and ideas upon which to base a proposed IEP (Appendix A) for the adult learners in the ABE/GED program. Literacy Corps tutors from Lock Haven University will provide the control group to test the form. One half of the tutors will use student files containing the completed IEP and the other half of the tutors will not have the benefit of the IEP in the student files. My conclusions on the effectiveness of the IEP will be based on this control group. Their performance, questions and comments will give me additional insight into the plan from that of the instructors' group.

By mid-December 1998 the rough draft of the IEP is to be completed. The student files need to be updated with the completed IEP's by the end of January 1999. The tutor/tutee matches will made in early February 1999. Observations and notes will be made until the first week in May 1999. Final interviews with the tutors will also conducted at the beginning of May. Conclusions will drawn with the information collected until mid-May. Changes will be made to the proposed plan (Appendix B) at that time.

Materials for this project will include: computer for typing forms, rough draft (Appendix A)

and revised plan (Appendix B), copier for making copies of IEP's for adult learners' files, paper for copies, tape recorder/tapes for taping interviews, pens and journal for collecting notes.

Data collecting strategies will include the following: the data collecting strategies that will be used are interviews - some of which will be taped, keeping a journal, field notes and anecdotal records.

The baseline will be the twenty-two Literacy Corps tutors from Lock Haven University who will be matched with an equal number of adult learners as tutees. Eleven of the tutee files will contain a completed IEP, the other eleven files will not. I will compare the amount of time it takes for each group to evaluate its students and develop/implement teaching strategies for them. I expect to see a quicker transition (less than three weeks) to the teaching process from the group with the completed IEP's. Another measure of success will be to compare these tutors' experiences against the experiences of the tutors from the fall of 1998 semester. I fielded their questions and frustrations with the current system as they began tutoring many of the same adult learners. These experiences motivated me to develop a plan for change.

The goal of this project is to shorten the evaluation and planing process and to see a quicker and smoother transition (less than three weeks) to the teaching process. Tutors' questions and frustrations will be taken into account as well.

The constraints will be the amount of time I am able to work on this project in addition to my job-related responsibilities.

The problem statement is: "To what extent will the development of an IEP form for adult learners improve the evaluation and planning process by instructors and tutors?"

IV. ACTION

The intervention began by using a proposed IEP form developed in collaboration with another instructor in this adult education program by mid-December 1998. I then gave the proposed form to two other staff members, gave them time to review the work, and then asked them to comment. The comments were reviewed in interviews and an ABE team meeting. By the end of January the final draft of the proposed form was implemented into each adult learner's file. This was done with the assistance of a work-study intern from Lock Haven University (LHU) and a VISTA volunteer.

The next part of the intervention process started at the beginning of February with twenty-two Literacy Corps tutors from Lock Haven University. These tutors were used as the control group. Eleven tutors were matched with adult learners whose files contained a completed IEP on our draft form. The other eleven tutors were matched with adult students whose files had the completed IEP removed. The tutors met with me individually, within the first week (required), after having familiarized themselves with the students' files. They were free to request other meetings with me and also to ask questions whenever they felt it was necessary. The purpose was to empower the tutors to begin working as quickly as possible. I provided whatever support was needed during The tutoring experience, so the were giving me constant feedback for about three months. This information was utilized when making revisions the IEP form.

V. RESULTS

In summarizing the data, I found that the overall results of this action research were positive. Having an IEP was beneficial in becoming familiar with new students. The tutors with the IEP forms (Group 1) did begin the actual instructional process much quicker, most in less than two weeks. The tutors who had to begin without the completed IEP form (Group 2) had a much more difficult time determining where to start working with their tutees. They had more questions and spent more time with me. It took these tutors approximately three weeks to really understand where their adult learners needed help.

After the *group 2* tutors got started working with their tutees, the idea occurred to me to give this group a blank IEP form and have them begin to fill it out. Through their feedback, I realized that although I understood what we, as instructors, wanted to see included on the IEP form, not everyone who would have access to if found it helpful, especially when it came to filling in the blanks. I realized that too much information can be included and that a long cumbersome form is not good either. The form (Appendix B) is still undergoing revisions and that we probably still do not have the final version of the form we are looking for. The more we use it, the more refined it will become.

Another impact to a successful IEP is to have the discipline to keep it up to date. We have to use a database, LitPro, on which to record updated information for reports that are due once a month. This activity takes time and in our facility, the instructors must fill in the monthly

information. Therefore, we tend not to keep the student folders as complete as we should. We are attempting to secure another intern form LHU so that we always have two of them available to this program to share some of the workload with us.

After this project began, I received additional responsibilities that took up a great deal of time. Through additional duties being assigned to the former tutor trainer/coordinator, she was no longer able to work with Literacy Corps tutors. So beginning the first of February, I was assigned the additional responsibility of Literacy Corps trainer/coordinator. This added responsibility put a serious constraint on my time. Until only recently, I was given overtime hours in order to handle my workload.

VI. REFLECTION

The impact of the results on this problem is positive. An IEP form that is too long and cumbersome is not good. Instructors must set aside the time to keep the information current in adult learner files. We have not reached a final form as of this writing. It will continue to be refined for a short while longer. As we continue to use the form, ideas surface that we want to try. Not all of them are adopted, but we want to be open to the possibility of new ideas now and then.

Individual Education Plan (Appendix A)

Student Name _____ Age _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Last year in school _____

Long-term Goals (personal and educational): Date Achieved:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Short-term Goals/Needs/Methods (personal and educational): Date Achieved:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Learning Style: _____

Interests and Preferences:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Pre-Test Results:

Date: _____ Level: _____

Instrument: _____

Form: _____

Level: _____

Sub-Test	Raw Score	Scaled Score	GLE

Ask adult student to describe himself/herself.

Would student like to work with a tutor?

Would student like to work with a college student tutor?

Ask student, "What would cause you to leave program?"

Interviewer Observations:

Tutor Name/Date/Phone (if appropriate):

Contact with student via phone/letter: Date: Comments:

Termination Status/Comments:

Staff: Date:

Goal:

Reading:

Materials:

Writing:

Materials:

Math:

Materials:

Life Skills:

Materials:

Individual Education Plan (Appendix B)

Student Name _____ Date of 1st Visit _____

Address: _____ Phone ( ) _____

Alternate Phone ( ) _____ How often does student plan to attend? _____ Day/Eve

Has your class graduated? Yes___ No___ If no, do you have a High School withdrawal letter? Yes___ No___
Do you have Photo ID Yes___ No___
Long-term Goals (personal and educational): Date Achieved:

_____

_____

Short-term Goals/Needs/Methods (personal and educational): Date Achieved:

_____

_____

_____

Learning Style: _____

Preferences in subject areas

_____

_____

Would student like to work with a tutor? _____ College tutor? _____

Ask student, "What would cause you to leave program?" _____

_____

Interviewer Observations:

_____

_____

Tutor Name/Date/Phone (if appropriate): _____

Contact with student via phone/letter: Date: Comments:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Termination Status/Comments:

_____

_____

_____

Staff: _____ Date: _____

_____

_____

TEST RECORD

PRETESTS

TABE Survey 7/8 E M D A			
Date	NC	SS	GE

TABE Battery 7/8 E M D A			
Date	NC	SS	GE

TABE Low 7/8 E M D A			
Date	NC	SS	GE

POSTESTS

TABE Survey 7/8 E M D A			
Date	NC	SS	GE

TABE Battery 7/8 E M D A			
Date	NC	SS	GE

TABE Low 7/8 E M D A			
Date	NC	SS	GE

PreGED Tests

Form -		Form -		Form -	
Score	Date	Score	Date	Score	Date

GED Tests

Score	Date

Other Tests: Identify below and on back

Reading Goals: Materials/Date:

Writing Goals: Materials/Date:

Math Goals: Materials/Date:

Social Studies Goals: Materials/Date:

Science Goals: Materials/Date:

Life Skills/Goals: Materials/Date: